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THE MUSICAL TIMES, And Singing Class Circular.

MARCH 15th, 1854.

Music in this Number.

I KNOW THAT THE LORD IS GREAT.

Composed by the Rev. Sir FREDERICK OUSELEY, Bart., M.A.

ON POEMS OF JOYOUS IMPULSE.

A Sequel to the "Effusion on Cream," intended as much for Musical, as for Literary consideration.

By LEIGH HUNT.

THE poems which the ancients called Dithyrambics, (a word of disputed etymology) were effusions of the most impulsive and enthusiastic description, full of new compound words and excessive expressions, the result, or supposed result, of an intoxication of the spirits. They were originally, and for the most part continued to be, Bacchanalian poems; but as love can intoxicate as well as wine, they came by degrees to sing of love, and so of any other feeling, in which enthusiasm predominated. They are not to be confounded with Anacreontics, or ordinary wine and love songs; impulsive as those may occasionally have been, Dithyrambics went much farther, as may be seen by what we have just said of them; and in general were probably a great deal longer. They did not so well know where to stop. Many doubtless were very bad, but fine ones indeed must have been poured forth by the genius of the Greeks.

It is a pity that out of all the poems of this description, which are said to have been innumerable, both in the Greek and Latin languages, only a single one has survived. They would almost seem to have been stifled on purpose by those half-witted literati of the monasteries, who in the middle ages had the keeping of the classics in their libraries, and who were a very different race of men from their lively, though by no means less religious successors, the good Fathers Quadrio, Roberti, and others, who could enjoy, and praise the enjoyment of the "good things" which Heaven has been pleased to give us.

The solitary poem alluded to is in Catullus, and a very fine one it is; though its subject is of so painful a nature, that it seems to have been written as a warning against impulse itself; at least of such impulse as tends to make people fanatical. It is called *Atys* (from the martyr to the worship of Cybele), and is supposed to be a translation from the Greek. We do not give a specimen, for our business is with impulses that are happy.

The first professed Dithyrambic poem of any consequence, that appeared in modern times, is that of Redi, the *Bacco in Toscana* (Bacchus in Tuscany), of which we gave a passage in our last, and which was published in the time of Dryden. Redi was physician to the Tuscan court, and a distinguished naturalist. Some of his friends visited England at that period; and Dryden, who was an Italian scholar, probably saw the poem. Redi had many poetical followers, the most popular of whom was Girolamo Baruffaldi, a good parish priest, author of *La Tabacchède* (the Tobacco-id) in which he criticises snuffs and snuff-boxes, as Redi did wines. In the course of it he gives himself a fit of sneezing:—

Donatrice d'allegri—
D'allegri—gri—gri—allegri—
(Lo starnuto mel rapia)
Donatrice d'allegria;
Che dà lume, e dà consiglio,
E i torbidi pensier' manda in esi—
In esi—si—si—in esi—glio.
O è pur lungo quest'esiglio.

Oh it is a most *delici*—
Lici—*ici*—most *delici*—
(Hang it, I shall sneeze till spring)
Snuff's a most *delicious* thing,
Wit it brightens, thought it deepens,
And to the nose's vast content
Baffles care with all his weapons,
And blows him into *banish*—*banish*—
Ishi—*nishi*—*banish*—*ishi*—
(Gods! what a long *banishment*!)

Dr. Aldrich, another good clergyman, who, like Baruffaldi, was also a wit and a smoker, and who furthermore was an architect and a musician (all harmonious combinations), wrote, as the readers of the *Musical Times* are aware, not only the famous charming round, "Hark, the bonny Christ-Church Bells," but a "Catch on Tobacco, to be sung by Four Men while Smoking their Pipes;" and the words of both these compositions, which we take to be the Doctor's own, are very pleasant, and of the right impulsive sort. (See Vols. 1st and 4th, pp. 12 and 134). Nor must something of the same praise be denied to those which Tom Brown (a shallow fellow in general) wrote for a "Sneezing Catch on Snuff," which is to be found in Sir John Hawkins's *History of Music*, Vol. 2nd, p. 766. Indeed, there is more of this kind of writing to be found in our old glees and catches than in any other quarter of English verse; but it is a pity it should have been confined to such brief effusions, and to the inspiration of the pipe and bottle.

There were writers in France long before the time of Redi, who shewed what may be called a strong natural dithyrambical tendency, and who indeed set the example (Marot in particular) of that admirable *naïveté*, or mixture of naturalness and archness, of which La Fontaine has been supposed the inventor. This constitutes one of the greatest charms of animal spirits, and is therefore a special desideratum of the style of writing that forms the subject of our present article, whether the mode be dithyrambical or otherwise. The dithyrambical is only the more irregular mode; is more at liberty to say what it pleases; and can run naturally to the greater length. It is not impeded by the laws of couplets or stanzas. It is a pity that two or three of Dryden's odes are almost the only specimens of it in English poetry. One of the liberties taken by the natural style of impulsive poetry, is the heaping of rhyme upon rhyme as long as the writer pleases; abundant examples of which are to be found in the works of Chappelle and Chaulieu. Quotations from these are tempting; but we must bear in mind the limitation of the subject before us, and confine ourselves to our countrymen.

We must not stop to consider how it is that our poets in general, of whatever grade, have not written effusions of this kind; why Shakspeare, who could paint the most social and festive characters, said little of his own enjoyments; why Spenser, with all his luxury and music in writing of the joys of others, said as little of his own as Shakspeare, except once (in his

Epithalamium), and then with as much solemnity as delight; how Ben Jonson, with the ancients always in his head, and with constant evidences of the power, in fragments here and there, could *help* writing dithyrambics; how Beaumont and Fletcher could help it; how Drayton, how Marlowe. They could all talk plentifully of the joys of others; how was it that they seemed to be afraid of committing themselves on the subject in their own persons? Was it out of a false notion of dignity? or was it the dulness of the climate, or the worry of domestic or other troubles, or what? The loss at all events was great, both to themselves and us. "Lord! how all creatures laugh'd, when her they spied;" exclaims Spenser, describing the coming of May. Why did he not oftener write in that familiar, impulsive manner, and shew us how happy he could be in his own person? Beaumont, writing to Ben Jonson, reminds him of their enjoyments at the Mermaid Tavern, where they and their friends left the very "air" of the room so impregnated with genius that it was

"Able to make the ten next companies
Right witty;"—

nay, "though downright fools," it would leave them, he says, "wise" men. Why did he not give us samples of the wisdom in as many joyous effusions? So Ben Jonson himself, inviting a friend to supper, says that he shall have a cup of

Rich Canary wine,
Which is the Mermaid's now, but shall be mine;
Of which, had Horace or Anacreon tasted,
Their lives, as well as lines, till now had lasted.

That is a very pleasant line, the one that we have italicized; it is in the right personal taste to be desiderated, and worthily introduces the capital bit of exaggeration that follows it. Why did he not write more such? He might answer that he did, and that his poetry was full of enjoyment. But it is not; at least not in the entirely happy, familiar, unmisgiving, self-referential, and yet not self-loving sense that we speak of. There is much elegant pleasure, more talk about it, and a good deal of assumption of it; but it is not the right, naive, happy thing. There are few *Cans of Cream from Devonshire* in our poetry, let the poets have been of what degree they might, or how great soever their stores were in other respects.

The style began with Ben Jonson's friend Suckling, in his *Ballad on a Wedding*. Were decorum not in the way, we should be tempted to transcribe the whole poem. How provoking it is to think that so many fine wits were foolish enough to write what posterity is obliged to leave out. However, we can give most of the best passages. There are no dithyrambical ventures in the poem;—no irregular metres, or compound words. The author is speaking in the person of a rustic, and they would not have been proper. But nothing can be completer of its kind, or fuller of a more real pleasure. Everything is fresh and genuine, not a word out of its place; the very rhymes appear happy, in a new sense of the term. The spirit of the morning is in the poem; the breath of dairies, and of the bridal flowers.

Her finger was so small, the ring
Would not stay on, which they did bring;
It was too wide, a peck;
And to my troth (for out it must)
It look'd like the great collar (*just*)
About our young colt's neck.

Her feet beneath her petticoat
Like little mice *stole in and out,*
As if they fear'd the light:
But oh! she dances such a way,
No sun upon an Easter-day
Is half so fine a sight.

[It was a popular superstition that the sun danced on Easter-Day.]

Her cheeks so rare a white was on,
No daisy makes comparison;
Who sees them is undone;
For streaks of red were mingled there,
Such as are on a Catherine pear,
The side that's next the sun.

Her lips were red; and one was thin
Compared with that was next her chin,
Some bee had stung it newly;
But, oh! her eyes so guard her face,
I durst no more upon them gaze,
Than on the sun in July.

[This pronunciation of the name of the month, which we used to take for a piece of wilful pleasantry, to humour the rhyme, was in the time of Suckling the common one; and it is the right one. July is a corruption.]

We need not dwell on the felicity of these celebrated passages. They speak their own happy merits, like the charms of which they tell us; and remain, strange to say, unique in the language.

Another friend of Ben Jonson's, Herrick, is remarkable for his spirit of enjoyment. Hazlitt, from too slight an acquaintance with his poetry, pronounced it not genuine, because he sometimes compared ladies' lips to corals and rubies; which the critic justly pronounced a "petrification" of lips, rather than a true representation of them. But the song which Mr. Horn's music made popular at that time,

(Cherry ripe, ripe, ripe, I cry,
Full and fair ones, &c.)

might have shewn him that although Herrick did not always, or perhaps ever, hit the flesh and blood of the thing like Suckling, he had too good an apprehension of it to write always in that manner. We might quote many instances to the contrary, but must content ourselves with the following burst of geniality, in an epistle to a friend on the same subject as Ben Jonson's. He does not confine himself, like his master, to a foretaste;—does not write his letter before the supper, but as it were, in the midst of it, with the warmth on his cheeks, and an invitation to many such.

TO SIR CLIPESBY CREW.

Here we securely live, and eate
The cream of meat;
And keep eternal fires,
By which we sit and doe divine,
As wine
And rage inspires.

[To wit, the right rage,—the fury poetic.]

If full, we charme—

[That is, make an invocation after the manner of poets and enchanters.]

If full, we charme; then call upon
"Anacreon!"
To grace the frantic thyrses;
And having drank, we raise a shout
Throughout,
To praise his verse.

Then chuse we Horace to be read,
 Which sung or sey'd,
 A goblet to the brim,
 Of lyrick wine, both swell'd and crown'd,
 Around
 We quaffe to him.

Thus, thus we live, and spend the hours
 In wine and flowers;
 And make the frolic yeere,
 The month, the week, the instant day
 To stay
 The longer here.

Then come, brave knight, and see the cell
 Wherein I dwell,
 And my enchantments too,
 Which love and noble freedom is,
 And this
 Shall fetter you.

Take horse, and come; or be so kind
 To send your mind,
 Though but in numbers few,
 And I shall think I have the heart,
 Or part,
 Of Clipseby Crew.

How well does that name of his friend close this joyous effusion;—with what a warm-hearted and pleasant vigour, like that of giving a toast, or smiting his hand on the table!—How good and true is the picture of the jovial party reading and glorifying their favorite poets over their cups! (for this is what such readers do). How good the increase of the fervour at every word on that line—

The month, the week, the instant day!

How hearty, and at the same time gentlemanlike, the "fetters" which are to detain his friend, made of "freedom" itself! And how well, in this instance (for he was apt to use them too often), do these very short lines come in, consisting but of two syllables, as if every word uttered in so much heartiness were worth dwelling upon, or emphatically uttering!

Milton, in his young and happier days, before he fell into the dreary mistakes of the Puritans, wrote an *Allegro*, truly so called, which would grace as well as dignify any collection of joyous compositions. He speaks in it of going to see Shakespeare's plays and Ben Jonson's comedies; and in its companion, the *Penseroso*, he eulogizes painted windows in cathedrals—things which he would have shuddered to say as much for in *Paradise Lost*. However, he is understood afterwards to have returned to some of his better opinions. In this beautiful poem, however, there is not so much of animal spirits as of a cheerful contemplativeness, and a willingness to enjoy the sight of animal spirits in others. The same is the case with Cowley, with Thomson, and with most of the contemporaries of their respective times. The occasional enjoyments of the two former, and their delight in contemplating the enjoyments of their fellow creatures, can be omitted in no such book; yet they would stand apart from the gaieties and transports of those which are our more immediate subject.

But in pure desperation of being able to say half what we would about it, we must hasten to return to our first proposition; which is, that, with the exception of a passage or two in Dryden and some very late writers, we have no further real, distinct specimens in the language, either of dithyrambical transport, or

of hearty natural enjoyment between grave and gay, unmingled with satire. Nay, satire was at the bottom of the passage which we quoted from Dryden; for it is spoken by Momus, and implies a sarcasm on the preceding age. Dryden's *Alexander's Feast* is almost the only thoroughly dithyrambical poem in the language,—an intoxication wholly derived from itself, and for its own pleasurable sake. Southey's *Cataract of Lodore* is another, though of childish intention, and written purposely for the nursery. It is, indeed, an admirable exhaustion of words, rather than a transport of pleasure; and is sufficient, like what it describes, to take away the breath. He has also a little blank-verse on *Snuff*, in the artificial didactic style; very good indeed of its kind, and fit to accompany Baruffaldi. Coleridge, too, has "imitated" a small dithyrambic poem from Schiller; and as imitation implies something of the imitator's own, and the effusion is truly poetical and to the purpose, we shall here appropriate it, in our dearth of national dithyrambic, as something which is half English. How far it may be inferior or superior to the original we cannot say, for we are not conversant with German, and have not time to seek the original and try to understand it with the help of a dictionary. It has Coleridge's beautiful music.

THE VISIT OF THE GODS.

Never, believe me,
 Appear the Immortals,
 Never alone:

Scarce had I welcom'd the sorrow-beguiler
 Iacchus, but in came boy Cupid the Smiler;
 Lo! Phœbus the Glorious descends from his throne!
 They advance, they float in, the Olympians all!
 With divinities fills my
 Terrestrial hall!

How shall I yield you
 Due entertainment,
 Celestial quire?

Me rather, bright guests! with your wings of up-buoyance,
 Bear aloft to your homes, to your banquets of joyance,
 That the roofs of Olympus may echo my lyre!

Hah! we mount! on their pinions they waft up my soul!

O give me the Nectar!
 O fill me the Bowl!—
 Give him the Nectar!
 Pour out for the Poet,
 Hebe! pour free!

Quicken his eyes with celestial dew,
 That Styx the detested no more he may view,
 And like one of us Gods may conceit him to be!
 Thanks, Hebe! I quaff it! Io Pœan, I cry!
 The wine of the Immortals
 Forbids me to die.

Here follows a happy passage from Barry Cornwall, between the dithyrambical and the contemplative:—

Old December!
 Art thou gone?—Then fare thee well!
 Many a good do I remember
 Of thee, that I fain would tell—
 Many a dream beyond all trouble;
 Many a feast where beer did bubble,
 Many a jolly beauty toasted;
 Many a mighty turkey roasted;
 Laughing, quaffing, boistrous weather,
 (Winds and rain, a song together);
 Friendship growing, wine a-flowing,
 Wit, beyond the proser's knowing!—

Wine! It opes the heart's red sluices,
 Letting forth those generous juices,
 Which so fertilize our clay—
 That the Night transcends the Day :
 Virtues then spring up like flowers ;
 Joy comes gladdening all the hours ;
 Justice takes an aspect bland ;
 Friendship puts forth its kind hand :
 Every thing both great and good
 Is thus confess'd, and understood :
 No more fear beside the flask ;
 No dull spite in wisdom's mask ;
 No mean, simmering, simpering blushes :—
The great soul all-radiant rushes
 Forth at once, on the social ground,
 And laugheth as the glass runs round.

How true, as well as finely said, is that! See also "A Panegyric on Ale," &c., &c. Now the beauty of the sort of poetry we speak of, whether dithyrambical or otherwise, consists in having the ingenuous, happy, exalted, and loving speech of the honest wine-drinker, without the necessity of being exalted by his cups.

Momus returned to his satire in our own days in the classical guise of Mr. Peacock, author of "Headlong Hall," &c. But the wit could never rid his imagination of the gods and goddesses who possessed his first affections, especially those of the lyrical order, and his satire often runs off into a purely jovial song. His "Three Ghostly Friars," who became at their death "three friarly ghosts," and were content to be laid in the "Red Sea," provided it were turned into "port," evidently possess his approbation; and the following truly "headlong" effusion is the masterpiece of its class. We know of nothing comparable to it for the thorough-going excess, iteration, precipitancy, and *crescendo* of its chorus. And the chorus justly constitutes the main portion of it; for its business is the glorification of an uproarious Welsh host, Squire Headlong, the merits of whose genealogy and whose jollity are alike to be vociferated. Rossini ought to have set it to music, and all the modern Welsh Bards have sung it at their anniversary dinners. We give it with its last new reading; and, albeit little better than water-drinkers ourselves, are willingly carried away by the torrent in imagination: for truth is truth, and excessive truth (within the limits of decorum) must be excessively told. We transcribe the whole song as an example of the *unmisgivingness* with which every kind of relateable transport should be recorded:—

SONG OF THE HEADLONG AP-HEADLONG.

The bright bowl we steep in the name of the Headlong :
 Let the youths pledge it deep in the name of the Headlong :
 And the rosy-lipp'd lasses
 Touch the brim as it passes,
 And kiss the red tide for the Headlong Ap-Headlong !

CHORUS.

Hail to the Headlong ! the Headlong Ap-Headlong !
 All hail to the Headlong ! the Headlong Ap Headlong !
 The Headlong Ap-Headlong
 Ap-Breakneck Ap-Headlong,
 Ap-Cataract, Ap-Thunder, Ap-Rhaiader, Ap-Headlong !

The loud harp resounds in the hall of the Headlong :
 The light step rebounds in the hall of the Headlong :
 Where shall music invite us,
 Or beauty delight us,
 If not in the hall of the Headlong Ap-Headlong !

CHORUS.

Huzza ! to the health of the Headlong Ap-Headlong !
 Fill the bowl, fill in floods, to the health of the Headlong !
 Till the stream, ruby-glowing,
 On all sides o'erflowing,
 Shall fall in cascades to the health of the Headlong !
 The Headlong Ap-Headlong
 Ap-Breakneck Ap-Headlong,
 Ap-Cataract, Ap-Thunder, Ap-Rhaiader, Ap-Headlong !

There is hardly saying anything after this, that shall not look like an anticlimax. Nevertheless, we must observe, that the *Can of Cream from Devon* still remains an original, a complete, and happy effusion; more happy, indeed, than Squire Headlong's glorification, inasmuch as there are no concessions to commonplace in it, and it expresses a less turbulent satisfaction; nor, to say the truth, in closing these retrospections of Poems of Joyous Impulse, do we know where to find another so well fitted, in point of gusto and naïveté, to be put in the same pages with Suckling's Ballad.

CHOIR AND CHORUS SINGING.*

(Continued from page 382.)

11. The usual compass of the bass is commonly nearly two octaves, *i. e.* from F to e, 

Some voices of this kind ascend with ease to f,  but these voices are generally of a light quality, which belongs more to solo singers than to chorus-men. There are also basses which descend with a powerfully ringing sound as low as E_b,  and even to D, . These voices seldom ascend

above d, . These are what we call Basses Contres (Contra Bassi). Their tone is powerful and sonorous, but unwieldy. These low notes are not to be met with in modern music, but we find examples of them in the works of Jean Gabrielli, Schütz, and some other old masters.

12. In compositions of music for the church, madrigals and [chansons] for six, seven, or eight voices, the masters of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries confined the parts for these voices within the compass of an octave, or a tenth at most, in order to place every singer in the middle part of his vocal organ, because the sounds produced within these limits are more pure, more equal, and better toned than those of the higher or lower extremities of the voices. When a Director of a Choir or Chorus has this ancient music performed, he ought to classify the voices with much care, and in a totally different manner from the classification for modern music. Not one of the shades which are met with in voices of the same kind should be neglected by him, in order that every singer should be placed within the exact limits of the best sounds of his voice. In order to aid in making this classification, I think I should here give the table of these limits, as we find them generally fixed in the productions of the celebrated composer, Palestrina:—

* *A Treatise on Choir and Chorus Singing.* Novello: London and New York. Price 4s. 6d., sewed.